

REMARKS

Claims 1, 2, 4-10, and 12-17 are pending. Claims 1, 4, 5, 9, 12 and 13 are amended. Support for the claim amendments can be found throughout the specification, thus no new matter has been added thereby. Applicant requests reexamination and reconsideration of the pending claims.

Rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) and § 103(a):

Claims 1, 2, 4, 7-10, 12 and 15-17 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by Kuras et al. (USPN 5,698,316). Claims 5 and 13 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kuras et al. Claims 6 and 14 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Kuras et al. in view of Sankrithi (USPN 6,666,406). Applicant overcomes the rejections as follows.

Claim 1 sets forth, *inter alia*, “a plurality of electrically conductive splice plates configured to join one of the plurality of composite panels to an adjacent other one of the plurality of composite panels at their respective edges” and further the plurality of electrically conductive splice plates “electrically coupling adjacent ends of the conductive splice plates to each other to form a continuous, electrically conductive grid on the exterior surface of the aircraft body.”

Similarly Claim 9, sets forth, *inter alia*, a method including “coupling each one of the plurality of composite panels to an adjacent other one of the plurality of composite panels using a plurality of electrically conductive splice plates” and “electrically coupling adjacent ends of the conductive splice plates to each other to form a continuous, electrically conductive grid on the exterior surface of the aircraft body.” Applicant could find no disclosure in Kuras et al. that teaches or suggests Applicant’s invention as set forth in Claims 1 and 9.

Although, Kuras et al. disclose that bridge 22 is to be used “across a gap between adjacent composite parts,” Applicant could find no disclosure that teaches or suggests

electrically coupling adjacent ends of each bridge (splice plate) to other bridges (splice plates) to “form a continuous, electrically conductive grid on the exterior surface of the aircraft body.”

The Examiner has stated that Kuras et al. disclose Applicant’s invention as set forth in Claims 1 and 9 by indicating that “adjacent edges forming the bridge 22 in Figure 3” are allegedly equivalent to “respective adjacent ends that are electrically coupled to each other.” It is clear from Figure 3 that Kuras et al. are disclosing that bridge 22 is merely an “expanded mesh 32 [which] includes diamond shaped openings 34 which are formed by perforating sheets of solid copper foil and then expanding the copper foil.” (Kuras et al. col. 6, lns. 21-23) There is no teaching or suggestion disclosed by viewing Figure 3 (or the written description thereof) that Kuras et al. intended to teach or suggest “electrically coupling adjacent ends of the conductive splice plates to each other to form a continuous, electrically conductive grid on the exterior surface of the aircraft body” as set forth in Claim 1 or Claim 9.

Accordingly, since the features of Claims 1 and 9 are not anticipated by Kuras et al., Claims 1 and 9 are allowable over the cited references. Applicant respectfully requests allowance of Claims 1 and 9.

Applicant reviewed the Sankrithi reference and determined that it fails to correct any of the deficiencies of Kuras et al. to make the claimed invention obvious.

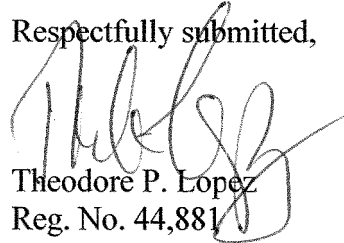
Claims 2 and 4-8 depend from Claim 1 and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons provided above with respect to Claim 1. Claims 10 and 12-17 depend from Claim 9 and are therefore allowable for at least the same reasons provided above with respect to Claim 9. Applicant respectfully requests allowance of Claims 2, 4-8, 10 and 12-17.

CONCLUSION

For the foregoing reasons, Claims 1, 2, 4-10 and 12-17 are allowable, and a notice of allowance is respectfully requested. If the Examiner has any questions regarding the application, the Examiner is invited to call the undersigned at 949-955-1920.

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Respectfully submitted,



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